

DALE FARM HOUSING ASSOCIATION

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Ms Dawn French
Project Leader: Dale Farm
BDC, Basildon Centre
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RE: Ms ANN COYLE: DEMOLITION AT HOVEFIELDS DRIVE

Dear Dawn,

I visited Hovefields Drive, Wickford, yesterday with a member of the Essex University Law Clinic, and enclose an Authorization from Ms Ann Coyle, of Riverview, who has asked me to raise a number of issues with you.

You stated have earlier that your agents Constant & Co were instructed only to carry out the demolition of abandoned plots at Hovefields on 29 June 2010. Ms Coyle returned to Hovefields on 28 June and because of a breakdown, and for family company, towed her caravan onto the plot nearby known as Upton Place (belonging to a Mr Sweeney).

She had received no notice (no 28-day warning letter that we are aware of) and when the demolition work started on her plot, Riverview, she was totally taken by surprise and shocked. She has a son, 16-year-old Martin Christopher Coyle, who is particularly vulnerable as he has learning difficulties and is easily upset. Up until recently he attended a special needs school in Basildon.

Ms Coyle approached a member of the Constant workforce to inform them that she was still living at Riverview and therefore they should cease any intended demolition there. This request was ignored and a digger commenced to demolish her utility unit (photographs attached). On further appeal, however, she prevailed on workmen to salvage her washing machine from the unit and also to remove to the side of her plot the family Holy Shrine (both are now on Mr Sweeney's plot). When she raised the matter of the destruction of her utility unit, which was crashed and put into a large skip, she was advised by Constant to contact Basildon Council.

- 1) Ms Coyle requests that you repay her for the loss of her utility unit, which cost her £650.
- 2) She asks why the utility unit was not taken into storage? Previously you have stated that the procedure to be followed in such operations is to store property so that it can be reclaimed by the owners.

Why was this policy not followed? Is it the intention to remove and store property, as stated in your earlier letter, if and when further operations are ordered at Hovefields and Dale Farm?

I have to say that the apparent lack of control by Basildon Council over your agents, which is emphasised by the fact that no senior staff were present on 29 June, is undermining any confidence that we had in your statements as regards the procedure for your planned future direct operations. This refers especially to the safety of children, as you have not responded in any satisfactory manner to requests from the Childrens' Commissioner on the steps you are taking to secure their safety; neither have you responded to the offer by Wickford churches to provide safe shelter for children.

3) In this respect Ms Coyle wishes to raise with you the evident fact that your agents took no measures whatever regarding safety during the demolition at Riverview. There was no notice issued to her that she was aware of, no warning notices were posted at the site, no safety fencing was erected (though a pile of fencing was available). And no effective action was taken prevent her son Martin, and other young people and children, from entering onto her plot while the heavy diggers were at work and earth banks being bulldozed into place.

In the attached photograph you will see that a boy, Peter McCann, aged 15, is inside her utility unit shortly before it was raised and crushed by a digger belonging to H.E.Services and hired to Constant & Co.

4) Can you assure Ms Coyle that during any similar future operations safety regulations will be properly and fully obeyed?

5) She wishes also to be assured that no further action will be taken to evict her from Hovefields without her first receiving a 28-days warning notice. A copy of this notice she be sent to myself, as Authorized voluntary advocate.

Yours sincerely

Grattan Puxon
Secretary DFHA
Gypsy Council



SMASH: A bulldozer wrecks a home at the illegal travellers' site at Hovefields just off the A127

Photograph by Chris Ruahton